

PROBLEMS OF, BACKGROUND TO, AND QUESTIONS FOR A LABOR PERSPECTIVE --
WITH SOME BEGINNINGS

By S. Wier

Preface

My failure to get this document out sooner forced upon Brian Mackenzie the task of getting out his document with little notice and in a very brief span of time. This is my apology and statement of high regard for his ability and sense of commitment to us all. To produce a labor perspective's document under such pressure is at best an imposition. I consider the outcome, however, a fortunate one for upon reading it I have found no decisive disagreement. This document is not intended to be in opposition to it, but rather a general background to it in the main. I will try to indicate whatever specific differences I have if time allows. It may be that he and others will find disagreement with ideas and formulations in this piece. I hope that he or they will be able to find time to comment on them in writing. If not, those differences or any that I have not yet recognized will have to come out in the discussion during the convention and that which continues thereafter.

I. A Discussion of the Backlog of Problems and Background

A. American socialists who have not been isolated from working class life have always been among the staunchest and most consistent defenders and builders of labor unions. At the same time that they have built and defended, they have sought to increase the degree of rank and file control within the unions and over the top strata of official leaders in particular. In return, they have not asked for or expected organizational power within the unions, as has been the general rule with the Communists for over forty years. At the same time they did not work "for free" like the social democrats during the last six decades, slavishly subordinating the needs of the ranks and their socialist ideas to the needs of the labor officialdom, thereby becoming absorbed into the bureaucracy. American socialists who have functioned independent of any bureaucracy or establishment anywhere inside or outside the unions have asked for the rights due any union member and no more: the right to employment and to put forth their ideas freely among those with whom they work and within the unions.

B. In most instances independent socialists have avoided taking policy making and administrative offices within unions unless and until the ranks of the union were fully aware of their socialist politics and the kind of battle it might be necessary for them (the ranks) to wage as a consequence of electing a socialist officer. "From below" socialists learned that the only union positions they could possibly maintain as militants was that of steward involved in the day to day struggle to maintain working conditions and on-the-job dignity (and; even then they have found that the job of steward often entails some separation from the ranks). They did not do this out of either a sense of heroics or of martyrdom. Rather it was out of an immediate as well as long range sense of responsibility to the people who elected them,

to the working class as a whole and to themselves, for the unions remain the only formal organizations that can defend the interests of the workers to any degree. As Marxists they have been aware that it is unlikely in the extreme that organizations which could in any real way do the necessary tasks now performed by unions will appear under capitalism.

C. Socialists of this tradition have known too that in a country whose mass political parties are based in the employer rather than the working class, the function of the unions goes far beyond their potential ability to protect economic and working conditions. The unions have been as they are now, the only forums, actual or potential, that workers have for the discussion and spread of ideas from one workplace to another. And, it has been the same socialists who have been unafraid of rank and file initiative and democracy who have not held back on the presentation of an idea that the needs of a struggle called forth because it might be unpopular. They have seen that their union brothers and sisters are quite able to accept the presentation of unpopular ideas from people they have come to respect and who have some humility. In fact, socialists have found that in time they won the highest kind of respect, even when they have met with disagreement, precisely because of their honesty and their confidence in the people to whom they put forth ideas. Finally here, the presence of respected socialists in the American labor movement has in the past made it possible for many beyond their number to realize the value of the existence of radical organizations in the general community without having to wait for the crush of objective conditions to bring that consciousness to the fore.

D. The IS seeks to continue this honorable tradition that is sketched in brief just above. We urge it upon all radicals as a foundation for building into the future. It was developed out of the lessons and experience of almost a century of American socialism, Marxism, and anarcho-syndicalism. The retrospection allowed by the 1950's and 1960's has made possible its sifting in order to cull out at least some of its major mistakes. Because it is a tradition and especially because it is a tradition in the selective sense of the world, it can serve as no more than a guide. It does not and cannot by itself equip us for the future. The body of theory, perspectives and program on which this tradition was built was in large part developed during the period of radical expansion in the 1930's. Few fundamental changes have been made in it since that time that involved any degree of wide scale discussion and full scale testing.

E. Socialists who share this same good tradition can today therefore be expected to develop considerable differences as they confront specific problems within the labor movement. None of the socialist groups including our own have made applied evaluations and analyses of three decades of vast change. We do not have a body of theory that speaks or admits to it. In turn, this threatens the very existence of the tradition.

F. At the same time we do not precipitously jettison anything ... that has been developed by us in the past. We respect our past. But we respond to the present and to change or we become disoriented. Ours must be a constant process of testing, of retaining what stands test, and rejecting that which fails. Our basic body of theory has gone too long without full test or examination. It has become untagged baggage that does not always reach any destination at the same time we do. Our failure to conduct intensive discussion out of which could come an up-to-date body of theory in all areas and particularly on the labor movement in the United States and Canada has already caused us deep wounds. There is no one to blame but circumstance and history, no one, that is up until now. We cannot blame ourselves for the period of near demise of organized Third Camp socialism on this continent during the Fifties and early Sixties. But now we have a new start, a new lease on life because of rebellion among the youth, racial and ethnic groups, and women, and because of the upturn in confidence of the working class that sparked into the open in the mid-Sixties. Then too, the Reorient split has put us on warning: "dig into theory or die." If we fail to do this now the blame rests squarely with us all, as a group and as individuals.

Without the guidelines made possible by the existence of a basic body of theory in which we have all participated in arriving at, we have no choice but to react to each situation from the gut, empirically. Under these circumstances there is no such thing as "a line" in the best sense of the term. What is contained in an article in our press will depend too many times on the individual who writes it. What our people do in practical situations in the field will depend upon the individuals and localized conditions. Differences between us will get fought out first in the process of practical work in the arena rather than internal discussion. Having arisen in such a way, differences cannot be handled democratically, allowing the maintenance of any freedom or mutual respect. Discipline, in the worst sense of the term, then inevitably rears up as a seeming substitute, but it is no more than a sidetrack to monolithism.

G. There is yet another aspect to this problem. The older socialists among us at times may appear less handicapped by the lack of a basic body of theory. Their experience and knowledge of the traditions equips them with their own set of guidelines. Our newer people, the vast majority, get little aid from this. They are pushed to become overly dependent upon a few leaders "at the top." Resentment is bound to result. The basic theories, now necessarily eclectic, that the leadership operates upon are not the same as their own. They had no hand in developing or formulating them. Or, let us look at the problem as it has arisen already in the practical arenas. As recently as a year ago before any number of our newer people had the benefit of direct experience in the unions, they were naturally forced to operate on the basis of their previous experience. The explosion of radicalism among the young during the last decade was in general a response against outworn values and institutions that no longer mesh with the reality of life. Specifically, however, it was a rebellion against

bureaucracies and bureaucratic conservatism. When numbers of young radicals left the university communities and turned toward the working class they found the same sort of resistance to creative change in the labor bureaucracy that they had found in university administrators. As could have been expected, they reacted strongly.

H. The relationship of the union member to a union official is far more complex than that of the student to a chancellor or dean. There is both a duality and a dichotomy in the former relationship. Union members suffer from the irresponsiveness of their union officials, but in the last analysis they can through their albeit inadequate franchise change the course of unions or destroy the careers of the officials. Students can have this effect on university officials, however, only through repeated direct confrontations. The unions do in some areas protect workers from employers. The university as an institution more than anything else treats students like an employing institution treats workers -- in the absence of a union. It is natural that young radicals who experienced more defeats than victories in the fights with university bureaucrats would be impatient to find quick new ways to deal with the labor bureaucrats. No more than two years ago some of our own people did not even want to discuss any analysis of the unions or the officials that did not call for placing the top strata of officials in the camp of the enemy in every situation. They felt it was necessary for all strategy and tactics to call for a direct attack on the officialdom at all times. Anyone who proposed any other course was viewed as someone who had to a degree given up the good fight. Thus, because of the intensity with which these young radicals wanted to deal with the decisive manifestation of the overly prolonged existence of capitalism, they unwittingly contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of distrust. It may be true that some of the older and more experienced of our people and members recently departed were or are not sensitive enough about the need to fight the bureaucrats, but it is presently impossible to be certain about that or the degree to which that may be true because the IS has not embarked upon a full discussion of the role of the labor bureaucracy. The contribution of our older people to the atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust was their failure, for whatever reasons, to initiate that full theoretical discussion. And it was that failure, again putting aside the reasons, that was primary to our crisis. If we had had such a discussion could we have avoided the bitter outbreak between ourselves and the Reorient people over practical union tactics? It is impossible to determine whether or not the Reorient split could have been avoided altogether, but it is highly probably that the breakdown of internal political life was a major contributor to it. Isn't it also highly probable that the breakdown in question called forth and created the unnecessarily precipitous differences over "struggle groups" and the "labor party" slogan? The question is rhetorical.

I. In the year that has passed since the Reorient split our people have gained a great deal of valuable practical experience. Already that experience has eased our crisis, but it cannot solve it.

Empiricism is never enough. As Marxists we have the tools to rise above it if we will but use them. The initiation of full and continued theoretical discussion will at one and the same time remove our present crisis and enable us to maintain the best relationship with the people in ISCO. They are no longer members of the IS, but they should be kept informed of the ideas that develop out of our discussion and we should remain in discussion with them.

J. The discussion of theory in relation to the labor movement and the working class at our forthcoming convention and the current discussion leading up to it should be viewed as no more than the opening of the discussion that will again arm us with a basic body of theory on which to base our day to day activity. We will, however, need to adopt guidelines on which to operate between this convention and the next one. It is true that no socialist movement in our tradition has ever made claim to having a "finished line," and we must hold to that single truth. But we must now place extreme emphasis on the axiom which holds that: "No socialist party or group should ever have 'a line' that is considered to be more than the hypotheses that it is currently putting to the furthest possible test." A body of theory cannot be put together in a matter of months, let alone weeks. Our people have only recently begun to have the advantage of being able to make direct observations and tests in the practical arenas. The content of those observations and tests, past and future, must become an integral to our discussion. We must therefore operate on the assumption that whatever we adopt at our immediate convention has a tentative quality; that it is even more subject to change than programmatic points adopted by a socialist organization that has already experienced some years of thorough theoretical debate.

K. At this point in the history and development of the IS, providing we successfully launch full scale and extended discussion, there is more than normal chance that minorities will become majorities and vice versa during the period between conventions. This dictates that we be ever more vigilant in facilitating the airing of minority views both at and between conventions. The majority has the full advantage of our press to air its views to our public. But the press must be open to the minorities as well. That can be handled simply by telling our public that the published articles of the minority are just that. It can be done with elaborate explanation to demonstrate the democratic character of the IS or it can be done with one published word, "Opinion," or five, "This is a Discussion Article." If we do not do this we not only fail the democratic test, but we monolithically fail to extend our discussion to our public and get the benefit of their opinion and knowledge.

L. Neither do we attempt to stop minorities from giving the fullest possible test to their hypotheses in the public arenas, including recruitment to the IS on the basis of those hypotheses. We require full adherence to discipline from political minorities in the following ways: (1) That when they raise their views in public they make

it clear that their views do not represent those of the majority within the IS. (2) That they air their views as fully as possible first of all in the IS fractions or responsible committees. (3) That their differences with the majority be kept out in the open and on an ideological basis. And, (4) that they inform people they are recruiting to the IS of the majority position(s).

M. We do not need a lot of tight and detailed rules to handle the question of differences among us. If we have those tight rules then in a short time we will have little disagreement in the IS, for all those who differed will have been expelled or have walked out in disgust. We need only general guide lines to handle the question of political divisions among us. Although the question cannot be elaborated in full detail here, the best discipline and only real discipline in relation to this problem is that which arises out of full discussion and consequent understanding and which is scrupulously followed by both majorities and minorities. (The majority gets the biggest share of access to all publications and leading offices. Minorities get their share of those offices and the press is not closed to them. The minorities thus see that it is possible for them to become a majority in the future. Only under these conditions, when both majority and minority or minorities feel that the arrangement is the best possible for both or all, are they willing to sustain relationships.) The resulting discipline comes primarily from an inner compulsion. The people of the majority can then say to themselves: "The organization is bigger, stronger, and healthier because of the minorities presence." And the minority is able to say: "They are not imposing on us anything that restricts our ability to develop or test our ideas." Each gives the other a bigger audience. Each forces the other to test its ideas more thoroughly. Ideally, our top leadership should contain within itself its own (ideological) negation. Ideally, because of the constancy of change minorities should appear in the top cadres first of all, and shrink or grow to be majorities there first of all... Because this does not always occur, socialist movements of the IS tradition have always gone out of their way to make the personnel on their top committees representative of the main ideological divisions within the organization so that the contrast and test of ideas goes on throughout the period between conventions.

N. Without full discussion of theory internally that in a sensible way gets carried to our public via our press, majorities and minorities begin to treat each other as enemies both internally and in public. When this happens we are on our way to another split crisis. Arguments sink to the level of who fired the first shot or who is "mushy-headed" or whatever. Moreover, some begin to try to judge others on the basis of "how active" they are. This usually begins with the majority. It is the nature of overly restricted minorities to be less active in public arenas than the majority. By the very fact of their untested differences they are not as integrated or as focused on external activities. Congenitally all minorities in their early stages particularly, find it necessary to spend a great deal of their time trying to work out their ideas. If our organization does not

have an active political (theoretical) life then minorities are denied that necessity. Quite naturally it is difficult for some within the majority to see the value of the minority if the organization does not have the facilities for demonstrating that value. Even the most sectarian of minorities perform the valuable function of reminding the majority of general truths that they have overlooked or neglected. In many instances it will be seen that it is the people of the minorities who do the most reading and research in source areas not sought out by people of the majority. The obvious value of this aside, whether it is appreciated at the time or not, is that minorities force ideological stimulation and test. Without them an organization is on its way to losing all vitality.

O. An active internal political life and avoiding the specie of discipline that gives minorities freedom to test their hypotheses only in the abstraction of internal discussion -- is the only way we can avoid the blinding, humorless drowning and unhappy internal life that comes before and after splits. That sort of discipline, which became fully developed in the Stalinist movement, guarantees that minorities will begin to operate separately if not secretly and then leave or be expelled. It is as suicidal as the informal organizational discipline practiced by the Socialist Party. There is no point in a group (or individual) remaining in either the Communist Party or the Socialist Party if it develops serious differences with the majority. The former handles differences by total legislation, the latter by the lack of any systematic guidelines at all. One leads to an ideological cul de sac, the other to a blind alley.

P. The IS is not only interested in the fullest testing of hypotheses of both majorities and minorities that hopefully develop within its ranks and leadership from time to time, it wants the full benefit of knowledge of the outcome of those tests. If in a particular practical arena there are serious differences among IS members, then there should be regular systematized reporting of (by persons representing the different views) the successes and failures that occur around the ideas that created the differences. What if, for example, one or a group of our people in a union favor a different set of candidates for top union office from those favored by the majority of our people? What harm is there in that person or group coming out for the slate they favor if they feel it is necessary for them to do so? People who are close to us will come to us and ask why we differ. Is that what we fear? Is it our opinion that workers are turned off by organizations that allow differences of opinion? Or, does organizational unanimity speed healthy growth? When we differ in public we astutely, if we are in the majority, let it be known that ours is the type of organization that encourages differences of opinion; that our point of view is that of the majority and the other represents a minority. If we are in a minority status of any kind we do the same in the same manner, indicating our disagreement with the majority positions. For people interested in development of socialism from below the situation provides capital, not obstacle. It stimulates interest and can be used to accrue prestige for the IS. And what if it turns

out that the slate of the minority is the better slate? Our close public would then be aware that the minority was right in this particular situation and would increase its prestige. It would still be prestige for the IS. The minority here serves the function of saving the organization from the embarrassment or worse of having unanimously backed the wrong slate.

Q. Let us take a different aspect of this problem. What is to be gained by demanding that a minority in a practical situation recruit on the basis of the ideas of the majority? Nothing. In fact, we can only lose. Internally, could we really respect anyone who is capable of peddling ideas they seriously disagree with and who, no matter with what pain, are able to compartmentalize their intellectual integrity? Workers will settle this problem for us if we want them to. Let any of our people go out and try to recruit on the basis of ideas for which they have no enthusiasm and heartily disagree with, and their lack of conviction will be smelled from a mile away. Deny any political minority the right to function creatively and they will leave as any individual or group that has dignity should. If the minority of this -- particular year or decade -- stays to recruit to the ideas that separate them from the majority as well as those on which they agree with the majority, then and only then does the majority obtain opportunity for extended exposure to the recruits and a chance to win them. With this proper freedom, if a minority fails to be able to recruit to its position or stimulate serious interest in it, it is fair indication that there is a failure. The failure may not be total or disastrous. It may only be in formulation. Then again it may mean the need to drop, in part or whole, the ideas creating separation from the majority. And, if the propensity for subjectivity has been avoided by full discussion, the majority will have increased its strength. The same sort of self interest argument can be made for either majority or minority. The point is, however, that no matter whether this question is approached from the point of view of self-interest, morality, opportunism, or scientific integrity, the above described combination of freedom and control is what is called for.

R. In part, the IS is a movement in which there is not a general atmosphere of warmth and humor to compliment its existing seriousness. We have branches where the attendance of meetings is a chore to be endured. Fun and real socializing is out of the question. A joke or laughter not at someone else's expense is rare. It is part of a vicious, circular, and self-devouring process. It sends people into the practical arena already prone to disagree or with little development of the friendship that can be such an aid to functioning. Must a young movement such as ours await the day when large numbers of our people are veterans of common and major battles of the class struggle in order for there to be a sense of camaraderie in or organization? The answer is no. A preliminary step and a prerequisite step can be taken now. The convention just ahead can begin the process of understanding which unleashes compassion. Rather than starting by trying to first divine areas of agreement and disagreement, we can start by giving thorough examination to the changes that have occurred

since the Third Camp movement in the United States and Canada last had an active theoretical life, unafraid of abstractions or practical test

II. The Backlog of Change Neglected by the Socialist Movement in the United States

1. The industrial union revolution of 1932 to 1941, out of which the CIO was born, allowed American radicals a very high degree of identification with the official organizations and leadership of the labor unions. Communist, Socialist, Trotskyist and anarcho-syndicalist parties and groups, each in almost exact ratio to their size, had members who became official labor leaders, or who became influential advisors to new official leaders. Particularly from the time of the outbreak of general strikes in San Francisco and Minneapolis, through the inception of the CIO (first as a committee within the AFL and then as an independent federation) to the time of the outbreak of World War II, alliances between radical intellectuals, rank and file workers, and a new generation of labor officials came easily. Most often with different goals, though there were many illusions to the contrary, they had agreement on one major issue: industrial unionism as an institution was a progressive development. The alliances were unique and short lived, but it was under the influence of this period that the American radical movement last developed a full set of attitudes and theories on the labor movement.

Now, thirty years almost to the day, after the close of that period, there is no ideological basis for a healthy or ongoing relationship between the ranks and the officialdom of labor. And, it has been so many years since radicals have been a presence within the unions that it is difficult for them to learn and articulate clearly the ideological basis for the historically demanded realliance between themselves and the ranks. The once fresh and progressive young workers who rose from the ranks to the top positions of leadership in many of the unions have long since succumbed to bureaucratic conservatism.

The depth of the bureaucratic degeneration of the labor leadership and the speed with which the bureaucratization process occurred is a principal, and in some cases the principal, cause of demoralization, skepticism and cynicism among labor militants and socialists -- former, present, and potential. Without a full theoretical analysis of the causes of past examples of bureaucratic degeneration and a positive prognosis for the future that is scientifically based, socialists appear to operate on no more than impressionistic assertions of faith in the working class. The volume of cynical academic literature on the question of bureaucracy grows, undealt with by socialists. Socialists seem unaware that works like Robert Michels', Political Parties, given ever new life by the works of Seymour Martin Lipset, provide a formidable challenge to the very foundations of working class socialism as long as they remain unanswered. In fact, the tenets -- both implied and explicit -- upon which the writings of Lipset and Michels are based have almost biblical importance for those

who live in the ignorance that bureaucratism is an eternal inevitability. This crisis alone provides a major task for socialists and their theoretical publications. Failure to attack it means failure to win respect and support in the intellectual community.

2. From the outset of the industrial union revolution the followers of the Communist Party in the labor unions set the tone for radicals. Their primary focus was on obtaining official power in the unions. The Marxist and other radical tendencies separated themselves from the Communists mainly by their adherence to the democratic principles of internal union government and their lack of opportunism, but their focus was still on obtaining official power for themselves or independent militants. The entire process was aided by the fact that rank and file militants were themselves focused primarily on the problem of who would obtain power over formal and official union bodies. It was natural that this should be their concentration because (1) official union machinery was needed just to make the new unions operative, (2) the unions were new in many industries and there were widespread and panacean illusions about what they could accomplish, and (3) the power of the informal work group organizations in the work place was at a peak and they were able to exercise a great deal of control over the formal local union structures.*

But the industrial union revolution did not institutionalize around the goals and aspirations that were foremost in the minds of the workers who made it. The primary motivation for industrial unions in labor's ranks came out of the alienation and indignities that workers experienced on the job. Almost spontaneously it seemed, they formed unions in the work place, but they were dealing for the most part with nationwide corporations. The power of the local unions in each workplace had to be centralized in order to keep the employers from playing off the workers in one workplace against the workers making the same product in another. The major fight to humanize working conditions had to be postponed until nationwide contracts were obtained. This facilitated the transfer of local autonomy to the top union leaders in the international headquarters. The postponement, with the aid of World War II, has lasted for more than a generation. The outbreak of rank and file revolts in the early 1960's served notice on a now case-hardened bureaucracy that the ranks intended to resume the fight to win dignity at work.

Disillusioned with their unions though not about to reject them, rank and file militants are today not focused primarily upon obtaining power per se within the formal union governmental structure. They have learned that that is not the means to the end they seek. Instead they often bypass that power fight and seek a direct and radical expansion of their powers or democratic rights in the total collective bargaining process. They want autonomy over the grievance procedure, the choice of bargaining goals and contract administration. Thus far,

*This point will be more carefully analyzed in a separate document.

the main tactics that they have employed to pressure for these goals have been voting against the acceptance of contracts negotiated by their leaders and wildcat strikes. At times these have assumed a mass character, particularly as regards the former tactic. Neither of the tactics has been coordinated on a regional or national level in more than a handful of instances, and even then the coordination has not come out of strong centralized organization. No large scale progress toward the goals have been made. Dozens and dozens of local unions within an international have elected rebel delegates to conventions and again because of the lack of regional or national coordination little advance has been made. Does progress await the formation of stronger local rank and file caucuses whose power is then centralized nationally? Hundreds of locals have elected new and more militant leaders from the ranks. It has helped but has been insufficient to achieve the needed degree of change. Is the problem again the lack of coordination of revolt on a national basis? If so, the task of militants is somewhat simplified and is one of building and waiting, seeking to win power locally and trying to parlay that power by trying to unite rebel locals on a regional and then a national basis. The task would then be to use that power to put collective bargaining to work improving working conditions and real wages, rather than the distorted purposes the leadership put it to after winning multi-plant or multi-employer contracts. This view can only lead militants to resume the power struggles of the Thirties, albeit for different ends. It includes and speaks to only a small part of the change that has taken place in three decades.

3. When collective bargaining institutionalizes, unions undergo qualitative changes ideologically, administratively, and even structurally. Bargaining did not institutionalize for the new unions of the 1930's with the signing of their first contracts. The process of bargaining could not routinize and solidify for any one of the new mass unions as long as any one of the major corporations in the industry they were organizing held out and sustained a threat to the rest of their contracts. Also, the first of the major contracts obtained in steel, auto, rubber, or electric, for example, were most often documents guaranteeing little more than union recognition. Signatures were applied, but the corporations in most cases continued to resist the process and open conflict continued. In the steel industry, the first real breakdown of resistance became noticeable after Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. That tragic act caused a flood of orders for American steel from as yet uninvaded European countries. The crisis that the steel employers had experienced in 1938 was ended. The first real breakthrough and establishment of a contract more nearly resembling the detailed contracts of today was not accomplished until the signing of the Carnegie-Illinois contract in late 1941. And, the rest of the steel corporations did not follow suit until the early years after formal American entry into the war.

The story was in general the same in auto, rubber, and electrical appliances. The differences can be measured by matters of months. The sitdown period in rubber did not end until 1938. Slim contracts were won at Sieberling (U.S. Royal in Detroit) and Goodrich and General.

Firestone continued resistance. Goodyear held out altogether and not until it was put under contract in 1941, could the top leadership of the Rubberworkers begin to achieve stability in their lives. Collective bargaining rights were won at General Motors as a result of the 1937 Flint sitdowns. Ford held out until 1940, and it is likely that old Henry Ford and Harry Bennett would have resisted even longer were it not for the fact that NLRB investigators, most of them former members of the LaFollete Senate Investigating Committee staff, had uncovered evidence indicating Ford's use of Detroit's organized gangsters to fight union organization. In electric a contract was won with General Electric as early as 1938, but it was not until the early years of the war that the industry became organized in a substantial way.

At the beginning of World War II the majority of American top labor officials gathered before Franklin Roosevelt like "feudal princes offering their services to a king," and most of the leaders of the new unions were among them. The restrictions of wartime that were imposed upon the ranks of labor freed the leadership to complete the organization process begun by the ranks, but on a bureaucratic basis. Institutionalization of collective bargaining thus occurred on the worst terms. Compulsory arbitration of grievances became a general pattern through the initiatives of the War Labor Board that labor accepted seats on. The degenerative socialization process that labor officials undergo was cemented in a tripartite arrangement between official labor, employers, and government bureaucrats. However, it is incorrect to conclude that the war was the major culprit. Its function was to accelerate the negative process that goes into high gear with the institutionalization of bargaining.

The atmosphere in and character of local unions in particular during the initial organizing period is one of conflict. The new self-organized federal locals of the early 1930's and the new and often self-organized locals of the CIO a few years later had a character that, for America and Canada of that time, could almost be described as revolutionary. Open battle and constant confrontation were the methods of the employers and in turn of the workers. The sitdown strikes and mass slowdowns were the more dramatic of the tactics used by the members and leaders of the new locals. Equally, if not more important were the mass meetings held on company property, in parking lots, company cafeterias, and even on the workplace floor. The confidence and sense of security made possible by the very physical nature of these meetings freed the participants to release the depth of their feelings about their work and their employers and to put forth and consider the most radical and sophisticated of ideas. The early memorandums of union recognition and minimal wage and seniority awards could not immediately cause great change in the attitudes of the ranks or change the character of their locals. The formal contractual victories only whetted appetites for ever greater ones. The momentum of "just yesterday" could not easily be stopped. A new consciousness was growing. Moreover, the employers regularly reneged on conditions they had agreed to or began new campaigns to quash the drive of the workers. This necessitated immediate returns to direct action by the workers. Only

when the employers recognized that they no longer had the needed legitimacy to act as the full disciplinarians of the people in their employ and that the union leadership could be used as a substitute disciplinary force, were they willing to join in the building of the institution of collective bargaining. The beginnings of qualitative change in the character of the unions from international to the regional and finally to the local level, followed upon this fact.

The process by which union leaders became disciplinarians of the rank and file need not and seldom does involve conscious and overt dishonest conduct at the start. The process becomes a natural one once the employers decide that it is possible for them to live with the unions. The establishment of systematized collective bargaining and "full range" contracts is usually viewed as the cure for most if not all current problems by both ranks and leaders of labor. Unavoidably the hope grows that it will allow the making of gains against the employers without the constant conflict, insecurity, and disruption of personal and family lives that characterize the organizing period for new unions. For the ranks it is an illusion that must soon vanish. Routine and home life and income may become more stable after bargaining is institutionalized, but the conflict at work goes on. Grievance bargaining that denies the right to strike at the local level mutes it and makes it less explosive. There is no record or official admission of its existence unless the production process stopped. There is even a pretense that some major slowdowns or brief wildcats did not occur, after they have been ended, in the new world of make-believe that is created, bargaining under unconditional no-strike pledges and compulsory grievance arbitration. It takes some time, however, to intimidate the ranks into an acceptance of that make-believe world.

As soon as the employers accept collective bargaining as a fact of life and their signatures are put on contracts that they do not intend to break in other than a piecemeal way, the labor leadership particularly at the top must of necessity undergo a full change in attitude. For a time they may remain bitterly angry at some or all of the employers or their representatives, but they must now show concern about the employers competitive position. The successful delivery of all the things in the contract that have for so long been striven for cannot be made unless the firms under contract prosper and grow. The open and total conflict relationship of the pre-contract days has to go. Now, a care has to be shown for how hard an employer is to be hit. The situation demands "flexibility" and an attentiveness to what the limits are or "you might kill the goose that lays the eggs." The rank and file by its very size and the nature of the condition in the workplace cannot, of course, be expected to show the needed care. Decision-making powers in the grievance procedure must therefore be placed outside the reach of the ranks and in the hands of the union officials who are responsible for the administration of the contract so that those grievances, which -- if won -- would set precedents to undermine the competitive position, can be watered down or discarded.

The ranks, however, do not share the change in attitude of their leaders. They too want to retain and maintain the contracts, but they see no reason for pulling back from a struggle to win a grievance that is legitimate. Their method for fighting a grievance is one of continued battle until won or lost. For moments at a time in the meetings down at the union hall it is possible for them to see the logic of their leaders on the necessity to keep the company in business. That reason is destroyed the moment that they physically or mentally return to work. The attitude of the company toward them is one of total antagonism and disrespect whenever the production process is in motion. Schizophrenia cannot live in a reality where there is so much immediate pain and unhappiness. For each one of them and their immediate associates the task becomes how to cheat the employer of what is expected. If the company survives it will have to come from the labors of the others in the workplace besides themselves. The local level leaders developed during the organizing period find it difficult to act in any way or any longer as a link to the top leaders. If they continue to work daily in the production process they share the attitudes of the people who elected them. Even if they are freed from work, it is they, the local leaders, that the ranks will move against first in a show-down, and not the leaders at the regional or international level. They must stay with the ranks in order to survive and save their souls.

The union administrators of the contract at the top cannot tolerate this situation. "Yes, the work is hard and the damned foremen and supervisors of the companies are so stupid that they continue to cause our people to be boiled up, but can't they see that if they continue in bullheaded battle that the contract and all that they fought for will be lost?" The ranks will have to be disciplined. The hottest heads among the leaders must come around to a reasonable attitude or be eliminated. "It is a hell of a thing to have to do, particularly after all the hard work that those guys did, in fact, without some of them we never could have done the job in the first place. . . but a few cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the welfare of the many. . . this after all is the real world." And for the leadership it is, if the contract is to survive under existing relationships. It is true that when workers in a workplace begin to make justifiable inroads on the ability of their employer to exploit them that they can put that employer in an uncompetitive position, or make it difficult or impossible for that employer to become competitive.

So unassailable was the new logic of the new bureaucrats new world during the transition period that was the early 1940's, that they spoke openly about their new role due to the existence of contracts. So without alternatives were they that it did not occur to them to show shame. In 1942, Clinton Golden and Harold Ruttenberg wrote a book titled, The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy. In it they describe in detail how the leadership of the Steel Workers union dealt with militant leaders who resisted compromise. The book is a unique document not only because of its contents, but because Golden

was at that time the veteran director of the Eastern Region of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and Ruttenberg was the educational director of the entire union. The title they chose to give their book provides some indication of their ignorant innocence. Their self image was a good one. They were key figures in the building of a giant union that was going to benefit and had already benefited hundreds of thousands. Their ends both present and potential, for them justified any means. The social-political value of their long out of print document has increased with time, yet it is forgotten except by students of management. In the wisdom of our retrospection it seems incredible that not one organization on the left has ever grasped it for the tremendous educational tool that it is. It is probable that it was passed over because even the most top flight of revolutionaries are prone to resist recognition that a period of peak revolutionary activity is past and that a transition period of Thermidorian reaction has begun.

The outward pacification of the rank and file requires that the official power center of the union have control over all staff jobs. There is no easier way to remove a dangerously "hotheaded" militant from a sensitive area than to appeal to his or her sense of responsibility to the larger struggle. And so rank and file militants with roots deep in their native workplaces accepted organizing jobs that took them considerable geographic and psychological distances from their home bases. But though the number of staff jobs is relatively large it is never enough to allow the officials to divert the militancy of more than several score at a time. The staffs of the Auto and Steel Workers are each just under one thousand and the workhorses on that staff can only carry a limited number of newcomers at one time. Thus, other avenues have to be found for handling militants who resist making the transition to the Thermidor and beyond. It is at this point that sections of the union leadership enter into collusive relationships with the employers. Employers are always in need of talent to fill management vacancies. The recruitment of a rank and file leader not only removes a thorn, but usually provides management with someone of top capabilities and energy. No one on the union side need ask them to conduct these raids. The corruption of the union results when by its silence it gives tacit approval to them.

Neither is it necessary for union officials to make formal arrangements with management in order to designate a rank and file leader that they would like to see removed from the job. A staffer comes into the local and baits a particular militant. The news leaks back to management. It is during this aspect of the reaction process that the fearful, the conservative, and opportunistic rank and filers receive, signal, and come forth as an alternative leadership to the one that organized the local. Even the names of the bulk of the workplace heroines and heroes of the industrial union revolution have been lost to us. The new and more conservative local leaders are the ones who survive to accept credit for the gains made by the formation of the unions. They are generally and except in periods of rank and file assertiveness in debt to officials on the staff and thus are in a weak

position in relation to the employer. They owe their new office and status to their willingness to concede local autonomy in the bargaining and internal governmental apparatus to the upper echelons of the union. In short and in a sense, they are willing to abide by Bonapartist relationships, they are willing to see whatever change and reform that occurs be initiated bureaucratically from above.

The transition caused by the turnabout of purpose of the labor leadership that was necessitated by the agreement of the employers to institutionalize collective bargaining, in time instills the leadership with contempt for the ranks. Add in the guilt that has appeared half-recognized and unadmitted and all the ingredients for a recipe for cynicism are present. Ingestion of it for any extended period frees the leadership to exploit their new position to in turn improve their economic and social status. Externally or internally, there is no longer anything present to help ward off full infection by the virus of bureaucratic conservatism. Kafka-esque metamorphoses occur. Consciously corrupt elitism can now be pursued.

The establishment of contracts with what appear to be comprehensive grievance procedures establishes a formal dual power within an industrial type local union. Now not only is there an entire set of officers headed by the president, vice president, treasurer, and recording secretary, all holding offices divorced from the workplace and process, but there must be a series of committeemen, committeewomen, and stewards inside the workplace to administer the contract and grievance procedure. They are the most accessible to the ranks and thus potentially the most dangerous to the bureaucracy. They have no responsibility for presenting the face or official policy of the union in public. They cannot be trusted to full authority in the grievance process. By contractual definition the international or staff representatives had to be given the power to determine with top local management the destiny of all grievances that departmental level management denied.

The on-the-job officers of the union are not immune from bureaucratic conservatism. If they are freed from the oppression of the work-process to spend full or part portions of their time at work processing grievances and handling union business, both management and the international union gets in position to cheat stewards and committeemen and committeewomen of their basic militancy. As bad as the buying and selling that goes on is, the change in in-plant union structure from that which existed during the organizing period. The early period of the union's life demands that the union have at least one key person, representative or steward for each foreman so that a maximum number of workers in every corner of the workplace get signed up and stay organized in the union. The good ratios of steward representation established in the 1930's have in major part been eliminated. Ratios as low as one to fifteen have become as high as one to several hundred. The ranks in these instances were promised that full time stewards with their own offices and telephones in the plant would allow better

representation. Experience has shown the opposite. Their aristocratic position and impossibly large size of the workplace territories they represent negated the advantage gained in their becoming full time, along with the negation of the freedom gained by the checkoff dues system and the union shop.

Despite the estrangement caused between ranks and union workplace officials because of the number of widenings of the ratio gap, they remain the most accessible, most often challenged and changed and most important stratum of official leadership to the rank and file of the unions. It is no accident that there are few unions that provide the workplace officials with any automatic standing in the local union governmental apparatus. That government is officially controlled by the officers elected to preside over the business of the union that can be conducted outside the workplace. It is the president, vice president, etc., who are the most likely to side with the international in any conflict between the local and national center, particularly if the local is large enough to afford part or full time employment positions for one or more of its outside workplace officers. The 1967, wildcat strike of GM workers in Mansfield, Ohio, provides the classic example. The disenfranchisement of the shop stewards in turn disenfranchises the ranks. Only formal parliamentary fetishists can escape the conclusion.

The reactionary changes in union structure that began apace in the early 1940's continue to this moment. The reform of the Steel Workers grievance procedure that I. W. Abel has been promising the ranks of that union since 1965, is right now being instituted. It denies the right of the stewards to bargain with the foremen and places that right with the grievors or grievance committeemen only. This automatically changes the representation ratio from roughly 1-30 to 1-200 or more. In the face of these changes the ranks of labor are demanding a reversal. Since the early 1960's and particularly the Special Bargaining Convention of the Auto Workers in April, 1967, the demand for a ratio more like that of management or 1-15 has been in the forefront of rank and file demonstrations. The right to strike at the local level has become a major issue all over the mass production industries as the result of the upsurge in militancy. The steelworkers have not yet had the opportunity to respond to Abel's latest move. By contract, union government and ideology, the relationship of the ranks of labor in the mass production and transportation industries to their officials is today very different from that period in which most radicals last defined attitudes, long range programs, and perspectives.

4. Since the early 1940's, Americans have been a population on the move. The old ethnic and cohesive working class neighborhoods nearby the industrial workplaces have become all but extinct. Informal organization in the work process no longer has the supplemental aid from informal organization in the neighborhood. Only as racial and ethnic minorities in the central city cores gain more employment in city industry does the advantage return. Thus, on two counts separated

from changes already discussed above, the institution of the local union using the monthly meeting to legitimize its authority has lost much if not most of its use value and authority within the ranks of labor. Technological change in the automotive industry combined with high employment levels have (1) destroyed organizational formations that were used to get increased attendance at union meetings, and (2) has created the existence of working class suburbs that are distant from the workplaces. Not only have they atomized former living area concentrations, but they have made it a considerable physical and psychological strain to get to and from union meetings in the city core areas. With the disappearance of the "taken liberty" to meet in mass on company property when necessary, it was the local union meeting that was supposed to provide a total forum for the ranks.

Parts two and three of this document will be put into the next Bulletin.

PROBLEMS OF, BACKGROUND TO, AND QUESTIONS FOR A LABOR PERSPECTIVE --

WITH SOME BEGINNINGS.

By S. Wier

(The following is Part II. of the same document. Part I appeared in Bulletin No. 15.)

III. The Centralization of Capital and the Changes in US Corporate Structure

5. In 1966 a total of 98 firms with combined assets of \$4 billion were acquired by large mining and manufacturing companies. Of these, the top 200 US industrial corporations alone acquired companies with assets of \$2.2 billion. At the end of 1964 the 20 largest manufacturing corporations had \$83 billion in assets. This was one quarter of the total assets of all US manufacturing companies. The 200 largest firms accounted for 57 percent and the top 1,000 for approximately 76 percent. The Federal Trade Commission Report for 1967 estimates that if the current merger trend of that time continued, and it has, that by 1975, 75 percent of all corporate assets in the US will be in the hands of 200 corporations. The first or top 50 of the nation's largest firms have a power of their own. Such companies -- like GM, US Steel, Good-year, Alcoa -- have not been engaged in a mad rush to acquire firms that manufacture different products from their own. However, the next 100 to 150 firms have been growing in large part through joining firms in entirely different branches of industry. Much of the growth has come through financial manipulations, through the kind of speculation where the opportunities for big financial gains and growing financial power are the chief motivating factors. In other words, the mergers have been based, not so much on gaining more efficiency, greater control of the market for particular products, expanding the company's interest within a particular industrial domain, but rather based on insiders, speculators and empire builders seeking new power. There is no real transfer of skills when an aerospace firm takes over a meat packing or sporting goods company. Or, if a coal company combines with one in coal. When Kennecott Copper took over Peabody Coal the owners gained the sort of powers in cities and regions of Utah that could well give it the power to exert domination in the legislature of that state.

Just below is the percentage of distribution of mergers by type of merger between 1948 and 1968. The figures are from the Federal Trade Commission Report for March, 1969.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Horizontal</u>	<u>Vertical</u>	<u>Conglomerate</u>
1948-51	42%	20%	38%
1952-55	37	10	53
1956-59	28	19	53
1960-63	12	25	63
1964-67	12	9	79
1968	4	7	89

Below is a diagram of the more than fifteen different international unions involved in collective bargaining with a classical conglomerate. The number of separate contracts geometrically exceeds the number of international unions, because different locals or groups of locals within a particular international union have different contracts.

Ling-Temco-Vought (LTV)

Braniff Airways

Airline Pilots
Teamsters
Machinists
Many unorganized

Jones & Laughlin

Steelworkers
Mine Workers
Electrical Workers (IUE)
Railroad crafts

LTV Electrosystems

Auto Workers
Allied Industrial Workers
Many unorganized

LTV Ling Altec

Electrical Workers (IUE)
Auto Workers
Machinists

LTV Aerospace

Auto Workers
Many unorganized

Okonite

Electrical Workers (IBEW)
Rubber Workers

Wilson Pharmaceutical & Chemical

Meat Cutters
District 50
Chemical Workers

Wilson Sporting Goods

Meat Cutters
Textile Workers
Chemical Workers
Clothing Workers
Teamsters
Leafer Workers

Wilson & Co.

Meat Cutters
Others unorganized

The tremendous increase in trend of conglomerate type merger listed just previous to the diagram just above has slowed somewhat since 1968, due to breakdowns in both Ling-Temco-Vought and Lytton Industries and resulting pressures from the courts as new mergers have been applied for. Few corporations have such a spectacular collective bargaining schedule as does LTV. Hundreds of corporations, however, deal with a dozen or more unions in unrelated industries. If there is a strike in one set of workplaces owned by a firm of this sort, the other workplaces are free to continue to work and profit and cover strike incurred expenses. General Electric which is not so widely diversified whipsaws labor with a variation of the same tactic. It negotiates over 90 different contracts with different sets of union representatives, although some of them are in the same union. Thus, when dealing with any of the many variations of the conglomerate type corporation, the different unions or sections of unions are faced with the fact that their different contracts come due at different dates and which are administered by

union representatives not in regular communication with one another. Management picks the weakest possible union unit in order to arrive at a pattern contract and then uses that pattern to whip the rest into line.

In order to be able to check this process that so weakens the primary weapon of labor, the strike, the official union leadership at the very top has been forced to try to coordinate the efforts of all unions under contract to a single multi-corporation. The biggest single example was led by the IUE in its dealings with GE and Westinghouse. Eight and then ten other unions were brought into negotiations. The GE corporation claimed that this was coordinated bargaining and that they were not about to negotiate eleven contracts at once and walked out of negotiations. A US Circuit Court ruled in behalf of the union after the union claimed that it was not threatening the firm with coordinated bargaining but rather coalition bargaining. In other words, the IUE was the only contract being negotiated, it was just that experts from ten other unions were aiding at the table. The court said that the corporation has always been allowed to bring anyone to the bargaining table that it chooses and that labor must have the same right, and, that if in the future the Corp. could prove that the unions were actually turning coalition into coordinated bargaining that it should come to court and that the court would rectify the matter. The coalition development was progress, but the unions are forced to go through the hoop again and again at great financial and energy expense. And this is one big successful example of the development. Only in one or two instances has the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, formerly headed by Walter Reuther and now headed by I. W. Abel, been able to get four or five unions together and negotiate a single contract expiration date for them. Since the UAW left the AFL-CIO the IUD has declined in strength. The crisis remains, compounded by the development of the multi-national type corporation which requires international coordination of the bargaining process, again by the present labor officialdom, if the unions are going to maintain their bargaining strength at no more than present levels.

The multi-national corporation is not a small additional problem for the labor leadership. Already it is a major one, but inseparable from that created by the development of the conglomerate. The IUD publication Viewpoint (Summer, 1971) estimates that foreign operations "accounted for at least one quarter of sales, earnings, and assets, or employees of 80 of the top 200 US corporations at the end of 1970." In that year they produced an estimated \$200 billion worth of goods and services overseas. In the 20 years from 1950 to 1969, the value of US investments abroad increased almost fivefold, from \$31.5 billion in 1950 to \$143.4 billion in 1969. \$108 billion was private investment. \$70 billion of that amount was direct investment by US based multi-national corporations in subsidiaries abroad. Much of the latter amount was in mining, smelting, and petroleum, but \$30 billion was in manufacturing -- a threefold increase in a decade.

The centralization of capital was but one of the major factors allowing this growth. New transportation technology now enables the swift movement of producers goods, machinery, and technical skills over great distances. On top of that the development of instant communication systems have made possible the centralization of decision making by the new giants. In fact, the more that the corporations have spread out on an international scale the more the power of decision making within them has been centralized. With their new world view it is easy for them to pick the country in which they can produce goods at the lowest costs and to pick the country in which to declare profits because of low taxes.

To organize all the major workplaces owned by a corporation within the US and Canada is no longer sufficient even for the needs of the labor bureaucracy. The new mobility and flexibility of the corporations threatens the ability of the officialdom to produce for the ranks at the present levels of success -- in the main, in the area of numerical wages and fringes. The loss of jobs to foreign countries poses still greater threat to their power base. In sum, the very basis on which they have maintained their position in the tripartite arrangement they established between themselves, the employers, and government bureaucrats is being chipped away.

If the present official labor leadership is to make a beginning at a solution of the crisis presented to them by the development of conglomerate and multi-national corporations, they will have to make considerable changes in the structural, governmental, and administrative forms of the unions they lead. If they do, it is highly improbable that they will on their own make efforts to increase the levels of rank and file participation. The real likelihood is, that if left to themselves, they will attempt to parallel corporate change and further centralize the decision making processes within the total union structure. The big questions are: Will rank and file militants simply counterpunch by only putting obstacles in the path of the changes, offering no alternatives to the present structure? Or, will they take the opportunity to fight for long overdue changes in institutional forms from bottom to top of the unions, changes that centralize the power of the working class through structural forms and procedures that demand -- for their very success -- the full participation of the rank and file?

6. Unlike the 1930's and due to the changes indicated just above in regard to the globalization of American capitalism, for the first time in American working class history there are objective conditions present which demand that American workers develop a consciousness of their international role. And, which further demand that American workers become leaders in establishing international solidarity if they are to obtain a progressive solution to their problems. The direct interrelationship between Nixon's floating of the American dollar on foreign exchanges together with the imposition of the ten

percent surcharge at the end of last summer, and the imposition of wage-price controls based on productivity deals -- wedding international and domestic crisis for all to see -- is to date the most dramatic testimony to this fact. American employers through the Nixon administration have provided the nation with its first national (struggle) issue since the Great Depression and at the same time provided the first international crisis which has made clear that American labor is a commodity on the international labor market.

7. In the 1930's and right through World War II there was a widespread sense of national inferiority among Canadian workers. They resented being far more aware of US politics than Americans were of theirs. Sensing that they were still to a degree under the domination of England they resented higher levels of material consumption just across the border. It was common to hear Canadian workers hold forth for the elimination of the border and the creation of one big country. They knew it would bring a quick expansion of American capital and an increase in jobs. (It should be remembered that Canada remained in the depths of the Great Depression right up to her entry into World War II.

In the post-World War II period and the US domination of England on a world basis, the American corporations moved into Canada full scale without respect to border. Today, the economies of Canada and the US are inseparably intertwined. A social crisis in one is automatically transferred to the other. The high degree of industrialization in contemporary Canada has given its working class a sense of its own power. There is the new militancy of the French-Canadians and of Canadian youth and workers in general. It has reached a point wherein the official journal of the Canadian Department of Labor publishes an analysis of, "The Coming Youth Revolt in Labor."* The attitudes of independence and self determination are by no means limited to the French-Canadians. Under these circumstances Canadian workers are no longer tail-ending Americans in any way. In fact, there can be no doubt that in many areas they will be supplying new ideas that American workers would do well to study, adapt, and emulate. Out of a sense of solidarity and self interest American unions have to cease bureaucratic domination of Canadian unions. Any marching together that occurs in the future must come out of an equal partner relationship. American radicals know little of Canadian politics, labor, and society in general. The elimination of that condition would be of great value to the American working class and for the IS and is the first step toward creating an alliance with a Canadian socialist organization whose politics are close to that of the IS.

It is now possible for American militants to take concrete actions to aid their Canadian brothers and sisters. As the result of rank and file pressures for independence, in the summer of 1970 the Canadian Labor Congress adopted a series of guidelines for the pursuance of autonomy. Last summer the Canadian Caucus of the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Papermill Workers, AFL-CIO, in the

*The Labour Gazette, November, 1971.

latest of a series of Canadian union bids for autonomy, went to the international convention and proposed: (1) that only Canadian delegates elect the three Canadian vice presidents, (2) that a per capita levy on Canadians be administered by the union's Canadian director rather than the union's US officers, (3) that the Canadian director be authorized to approve Canadian contracts, and (4) that a supplementary strike fund be established in Canada. The 1,200 convention delegates rebuffed the Canadian caucus on all four proposals. This strengthened the position of rebel locals like the one in Gatineau, Quebec, that are seeking near complete independence. The Canadian mills are largely American owned. Like most, this example demonstrates that unity against the employers cannot be had without a full expansion of democracy to the Canadians.

The Canadian pulp and sulphite union has wired Nixon protesting wage controls, the surtax, and has come out for merger of their union with the United Papermakers and the Printing Pressmen.

8. American society has only experienced a small fraction of the social change that automation must inevitably bring to it. We have but to look backward. The introduction of the assembly line into American industry on a mass basis did not begin in the 1930's, but as early as the opening years of World War I in Europe (1914). By the mid-1920's, assembly lines had finally created a large enough number of semi-skilled jobs to create a base for industrial unionism. Until that time the concept of industrial unionism was the property of visionaries. Regardless of all the education to the idea accomplished by socialists like Eugene Debs and by the Wobblies, the workers who could benefit by industrial unionism did not have the power to make the idea a reality.

In the further expansion of industry during and after American participation in World War I, the idea no longer needed to remain an abstraction. Three more ingredients were needed, however, before industrial unions would be able to appear and then stabilize their existence nationally. A societal shock was needed to jar the feelings, ideas and consciousness to an extent wherein American could to an extent free themselves to break with the routine, traditions, values, institutions, and ideas upon which they had been operating up to that time. The Great Depression of 1929 provided that shock, the break in the continuities and the release that allowed workers to begin creative construction of new institutions. Independently organized industrial union locals formed by rank and file workers, who had the historical day before been in bread lines, made their appearance with the first upturns in employment in 1932. Through the Twenties and before, they had endured the disruption, exhaustion, and anxieties that assembly line methods brought to their lives without being able to retaliate openly or on large scale. To do this they not only had to establish

their union securely at the level of the workplace, but had to reach out to obtain economic and social solidarity with the workers in other workplaces of the same industry. An entire communications network had to be created. To accomplish this the workers needed to very rapidly acquire the second ingredient: a source of writing, legal and other technical skills. It was ready and available in the radicalized sections of the middle class. Freed to leave their class mainly by the Russian Revolution and the plague of unemployment that had hit the middle classes with the "Crash of 1929," in hundreds and hundreds of industrial cities large and small, intellectuals made themselves available to the industrial union revolution. Although radical political organizations many times played a role in this development, it was not done on the basis of national directives from either the side of the workers or intellectuals. Workers at a workplace rebelled and began to set up a union. They sought to expand upon their resources within their general community. Who made the first contact with who is not now important to the discussion. What is vital here is that the basis for what was to become an industrial union network that stretched over the US and Canada, began with independent alliances between workers and radicalized intellectuals on a city for city and region for region basis. By 1935, the workers together with the intellectuals had proven the viability of industrial unionism to a point that allowed a section of the labor bureaucracy to recognize its viability. John L. Lewis, the leader of the only large fully industrial union on this continent had found his position unstable due to his inability to deliver larger amounts for his ranks. He needed the existence of unions in steel in particular and they had to be unions his union could easily deal with. In other words, they had to be single unit unions within each workplace rather than a complexity of different craft unions. The climate of the 1930's was one of change for everyone, but specifically for John L. Lewis a crisis had been created by the semi-skilled workers. Rebellions and revolts in the steel plants had already forced the steel companies to improve wages and conditions to a degree in the hope of keeping unions out or coopting the newly formed unions that had just appeared. The coal operators were in too many instances losing numbers of their labor force to the nearby mills. Lewis was thereby freed to seek new ideas. The new independent and often federally chartered locals secured by the worker-intellectual alliance demonstrated to the practical old bureaucrat the workability of industrial unionism in mass production and transportation. Through him, the coal miners of America provided the third ingredient that was needed in order to establish industrial unionism on the part of the North American continent officially dominated by Anglo-Saxon law, tradition, and values: the funds and personnel to create a national organizational structure in the US and Canada. When Lewis and the cadre of young organizers with which he had surrounded himself inside the AFL's Committee for Industrial Organization walked out of the old federation's convention to set up the independent Congress of Industrial Organizations, it signalled the end of the automatic domination of the aristocratic building trades unions over organized labor. Hutcheson of the Carpenter's Union would no longer be able to publicly

and politically function as if America contained only workers that had served long apprenticeships.

We know that the combination of new levels of mechanization and computer science which have come to be identified as automation have caused and will cause more technological unemployment and dislocation. We know that automation deskills workers, technicians, and professionals. Those realities have been harped on by liberals and radicals to the point where they bore the listeners or readers of liberal and radical publications. To continue to simply agitate against the negative results is to make humdrum cliché of tragedy. What are the feelings and attitudes of Canadians and Americans who have experienced automation or who sense that automation could soon reach into and disrupt life in their workplaces? What shocks have occurred and what have they broken loose? Is it possible that the terror of automation exists without at the same time freeing the thinking of those who experience it to consider new ideas that involve basic institutional change? What new ideas are already being "batted around" among the past, present, and future victims of automation? What new ideas does the new objective-subjective condition call forth for possible testing that have not as yet been articulated or conceptualized? Does automation present the possibility for the creation of new vehicles for social change as did the mass introduction of assembly line techniques? Charles R. Walker, author of American City (Minneapolis General Strike, 1934) and co-author of Man on the Assembly Line, claims that when a workplace changes from labor intensive to capital intensive or continuous process techniques there is a consequent change in the attitudes of the workers" they want to increase their powers of participation in the workplace decision making processes.* What other possible positive conditions are created by automation? If analyzed, might they not bring a quality of hope to the content of underlying despair that now characterizes the socialist and new left press including Workers' Power.

Only small amounts of condemnation of "what is" can be digested in the absence of ideas about "what could be." Has automation, for example, done anything to create the basis for a new alliance between sections of the working and middle classes? If so, why, on what magnitude and level and what type or types of organizational vehicle are n needed to make it operationally progressive and stable? If we can come up with some potential answers to these questions we will develop the ability to stimulate enthusiasm among our public and among ourselves.

*See Walker's article, "Life in the Automatic Factory," Harvard Business Review, Vol. 36 (Jan.-Feb., 1958), pp. 111-119.

THE RANK FILE (INFORMAL) WORK GROUP

Its Dynamics Within Union-Organized Industry

By Ken Michaels with S. Wier

(A supplement to "Problems of, Background to, and Questions for a Labor Perspective -- With Some Beginnings" by S. Wier)

Recent development in American labor have struck a decisive blow against the myth of the "satisfied" and "affluent" worker and have silenced those in the midst of proclaiming a new age of "industrial peace," or, as Daniel Bell express it, the "Welfare State of the Proletariat."¹ Beginning with the slowdowns and walkouts in steel in the early 1950's and the wildcat contract rejections that have plagued auto since 1955, the rising militancy of the rank and file has manifested itself in almost every corner of American industry. The Philadelphia Teamsters wildcat of 1965, which saw guerrilla warfare by truckers on the Pennsylvania highways; the San Francisco painters revolt of the same year, which ended only with the assassination of its leaders, Dow Wilson; the unofficial strikes of the Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio coal miners in 1965-66; the airline mechanics' five week strike in 1966, continued in the face of industry, union, and government pressures against it.

These are just a few of the eruptions that signalled the end of what had appeared to be an era of worker apathy during the "fabulous fifties." In addition, the scores of localized revolts forced changes in the top offices of half a dozen unions, including the United Steel Workers, International Union of Electrical Workers, United Rubber Workers, and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. There is not now a major union that has not had its experience with the "new" attitudes of the ranks. There has been a disappearance of the old work ethic. Contract rejections remain high. Wildcat and "quickie" strikes are commonplace. In private industry the workers have found that the rebellion forms they tried in the 1960's did not force their leadership to move to the degree necessary to make the fights that would again make their unions effective against the employers. Dissatisfaction remains, awaiting the development of new methods of struggle to force union officials to lead, and come up with bold new programs, or move out of the way. Wage controls have not intimidated any section of the workers. In the public sector a new dimension has been added to the class struggle. To win straight union demands, city employees in New York and San Francisco in the last two years have conducted near general strikes. Moreover, professional and white collar workers, including symphony musicians, museum workers, telephone workers, and teachers, plus postal and other federal employees are forming unions in struggles that rival those of the 1930's. The drive to unionize includes even policemen.² It has become increasingly clear that, while some of these rank and file rebellions have contained demands for higher wages, many of them have not, and the principal demands have been for better working conditions and against speedup, layoffs, and compulsory overtime. In those cases where the wage issue was important, as in the airline mechanics strike, the demand is more often than not for simple parity and equity with similar occupations in other industries, or for a raise to offset inflation.³

While most of these labor insurgencies have been duly reported in the national press, coverage has largely ended at the headline. Little attempt has been made to analyze either the detailed or overall structure of these revolts. Both the union leadership and the intellectual community around it have remained so it seems strangely silent.⁴ In fact, however, the silence is not so strange, for the recent

revolts in labor have brought into relief the fact that the unions, with their enormous press, and the industrial social scientists, with all their research, have produced a relatively tiny body of literature which deals with the actual organization of a strike or even a union. The union press, says a major labor historian, exists chiefly to "glorify the leaderships in power and to defend their policies. Their historical value is chiefly as a source of viewpoints, policies, and official programs advanced by union leaders."⁵ The majority of industrial sociologists remain wedded to the concepts of "industrial democracy," which sees management and union working out their differences in a friendly fashion, or at least well-manneredly, over the collective bargaining table and through the grievance procedure.⁶ Clearly, in this framework there is little room for wildcats, slowdowns, and other direct action forms of struggle.

Literature dealing with the sociology of the strike, such as it exists, seems to confirm the idea, illustrated by the recent strike waves, that, contrary to popular viewpoint, it is issues of working conditions, line speed (or its equivalent), and job security, including seniority, that are uppermost in the strikers' minds. In Alvin Gouldner's Wildcat Strike, written in 1954, and the only work of its kind, the strike was initially caused largely by a change in supervisory management that created hostility among the plant's workers by breaking up established working patterns. The fact that the wage issue assumed some real importance as the strike went on, Gouldner puts to largely outside and structural pressures; the demand for higher wages tended to pacify wives and creditors, it unified the various unsatisfied elements of the plant, it was a more easily handled factor to bargain with management for, and it tended to give the strike more legitimacy in the eyes of the union bureaucracy.

Bernard Karsh's unique work, Diary of a Strike, deals with a somewhat different situation in which a plant is organized from the outside by a member of the staff of a large AFL union. In this particular instance, the wage scale of the company was far below par, and the fact that this was forcing down wage scales generally in the area led to the organizing drive by the union. However, even in this case, where the wage issue was decidedly central, it was not the deciding factor for many of the workers who joined the union and supported the strike. Despite the relatively high importance of the wage issue, as compared to other strike situations, gripes about rough treatment from the supervisors, lack of job security, and the general run-around given a grieving worker were just as important to rallying the workers behind the union.

Even more revealing in Karsh's book is the fact that, far more than their own beliefs in the issues, the larger section of the rank and file rallied to the union in support of certain key respected leaders who had decided to join the union. These individuals had been work group leaders long before the union began the organizing drive, and their unofficial power accorded them in the plant by the other workers was an essential factor in the organization and maintenance of union support.⁹

This suggests that central to each worker's mind was not a particular issue or set of issues as such, but rather a desire to conform to the decisions of his or her informal work group and, by extension, the decisions of that group's informally delegated spokespersons. In Gouldner's study, in fact, it was the attempt of the supervisors to take over the control that the workers considered within the bounds of their own informal organizational structure that caused the primary tensions.

While Karsh's and Gouldner's studies deal only with workers under special stress conditions, there is ample evidence in other academic studies to suggest strongly that the discipline of the informal work groups has a major effect on day-to-day relations on the shop floor. Ever since the Hawthorne Experiments at Chicago Western Electric in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, sociologists of the management dominated "worker satisfaction" school have come to the conclusion that worker participation in decision-making is necessary to maintain and increase worker morale. Attempts to achieve this within the management framework have not succeeded too well, however; at a certain point the autonomy of the workers begins to threaten "management's rights" and the experiment ends.¹⁰ This leaves open the question of the real potential of the organizational powers of the work group, but has proven fairly conclusively that, as far as it has been allowed to function, it can easily take over the work area functions of management. Another factor contributing to the failure of management-worker relations schemes is that workers prefer to be left alone to do their work without interference from management, even if it is presented as a helping hand:

"Just as the factory worker, when he was at school, regarded the teachers as management and went on strike or slowdown against their well-intentioned or class-biased efforts, so in the factory he does not take the glad hand held out by the personnel department. Indeed, while the manager believes that high production attests high morale, the opposite may be the case; . . . if the workers feel united in solidarity and mutual understanding -- which they would define as 'high morale' -- the conditions exist for facilitating slowdowns and the systematic punishment of rate-busters."¹¹

The system by which the work group disciplines its members is complicated and often very subtle. The principal weapon is social isolation. Those who won't go along with the group have no one to talk to, joke, or eat with. They are barred from the shop grapevine that often has important news. The work shortcuts learned by other workers over the years will remain unknown to them. Further, they or he or she will receive little help from management, who will note their lack of co-operation with other workers and frown upon their inability to "get along" with the majority, thus unconsciously aiding the work group in its restriction of output. The non-conformer(s), working under the hostile gaze of both peers and management, finds work far more difficult and unrewarding. In the end, the "rate-buster" often ends up earning less than the members who have jointly restricted their output, and paradoxically, his or her level of output sometimes falls below the norm.¹² In order to assure a steady rate of production and thus escape the scrutiny of the higher-ups, the foremen or forewomen will often aid the workers in production restriction, and in this way they serve as a buffer between the work group and the rest of management, and secure the rule of the work group over its own production.¹³

The reason for restriction of work output is not limited to the desire to maintain levels of incentive pay. Output restriction discipline serves much more than a purely economic function. The function of discipline within the work group takes on a social tone as well, as the comment of a worker will attest:

"Sure, I think most of us would admit that we could double our take home if we wanted to shoot the works, but where's the percentage? A guy has to get something out of life. Now my little lady would rather have me in a good humor than have the extra money. The way it work out none of us are going to be Van-Asterbilts so why not get a little pleasure out of living together and working together."¹⁴

From the standpoint of the worker, the control by the work group of production is closely wound up with wage stability, job security, working conditions, social interaction, relationship to management, work satisfaction, and even psychological satisfaction. There is no clear line that can be drawn among the actions of the work group or among the factors they affect. It is for this reason that any encroachment by management which severely attacks the patterns of authority traditionally established by the work group can cause an incident or conflict which has the potential to spread to all areas of friction in the shop, and cause a considerable lowering of shop morale.

To protect itself from such attacks from the company management, the work group uses a variety of devices, the most visible of which is the union. The union is formed when the work group realizes a common area of interest exists with other work groups. Having established this bond, the work group does not disappear into the larger grouping of the union, but maintains its autonomy. The work group's relationship to the union is described by a team of top government labor analysts:

"Our observations suggest that participation in formal union activity -- such as attendance at meetings, voting in elections, and serving in office -- is not the full measure of awareness and interest on the part of the membership; that on the contrary, these formal activities, although carried on by only a few of the members, are outward manifestations of an interest and awareness of union affairs of most of the shop society. The so-called 'active members' who participate in union affairs are also in close touch with the rest of their fellows in the shop. There is no organized selection of the active participants, but they are in fact representatives of the whole group, and so we call them 'informal representatives.' The shop society and the union organization are related to each other through the informal representation of the members in the shop by the active participants in formal union affairs."¹⁷

This reveals that formal participation in union activities is only one area of real shop interest, and hardly the best indicator. Far more revealing, however, is the fact that the average rank and filer receives his or her information by way of shop talk with his or her informal work group and its informal representatives to the union. This tends to color the workers' evaluation of union policies not by their effect on the union as a whole so much as on their effect upon his or her work group. Another set of industrial relations analysts believe that the views of a worker toward the policies of his or her own work group were far more important than his or her views of the union:

"It was quite clearly understood in each of these factories that a man might think as he pleased about labor union organization, but that he must conform to the commonly accepted pattern of output restriction."¹⁸

The point is even clearer in light of the fact that the union in question was working with management to break down the output restriction system.¹⁹

A split of interests along work group lines within the union occurs repeatedly at contract negotiation time. In his article "Fractional Bargaining Patterns and Wildcat Strikes," David R. Hampton explains this process:

"Bargaining by work groups and subsections of management or fractional bargaining as the process is sometimes called, arises because the divergent aspirations and powers of multiple units within complex unions and corporations

meet over issues about which there is disagreement. These dynamics exist within collective bargaining relationships and are analytically separable from them."²⁰

Further,

"Slowdowns and wildcat strikes may also be viewed as tactical variations in the exercise of power by work groups in fractional bargaining. Inasmuch as the containment of disruptive tactics is a necessary sub-goal for bargaining relationships which are to continue, identification of factors which condition work groups to engage in disruptions poses a problem of general interest."²¹

It is clear that for the union leadership to effectively negotiate a contract, sell it to the workers, and maintain its enforcement for its duration, the power of the fractional bargaining units, that is, the work groups, must be broken. The process by which leaders of troublesome work groups are weeded out, often enough with the help of management, is as old as industrial unionism itself, as this case study from Golden and Ruttenberg's The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy indicates:

"On Sunday, March 2, 1941, Stanley Orlosky, life-long union worker, a pipe fitter in a steel mill, was expelled from the union after a trial on charges of 'violation of obligation to the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. . . . The talking for which Stanley was fired consisted of charging the incumbent union officers with 'selling the men down the river. . . .' Stanley's leadership was essential to the establishment of the union against bitter resistance, but after it had been fully accepted by management such leadership was a handicap to the development of co-operative union-management relations."²²

This process of elimination of "irresponsible" elements of rank and file leadership does indeed promote industrial "peace" of a sort, but at the cost to the union of undermining the very base of its support, the power of the work group and the authority of its leaders. Authority within the union, therefore, must be transferred bureaucratically to the upper stratum of union officialdom, an action which facilitates the negotiation of a uniform contract, but also creates a political and social cleavage between the ranks and the bureaucrats. In order to maintain support or even acceptance among the ranks in the absence of a real political and social base, the bureaucracy of American unions have increasingly adopted a stance of pressing for the most broadly based, tangible, and easily negotiated demands, principally those centered around wages, vacations, and fringe benefits. In the period 1939-1960 the tremendous rise of national productivity made it comparatively easy to gain such demands, and the atomization of traditional work groups during World War II and the atmosphere of political repression during and after the Korean War kept rank and file resistance at a minimum. As the following quote from David McDonald, former president of the United Steel Workers, illustrates, the myth of the generally satisfied but wage-conscious worker was solidly entrenched in the uppermost section of the union bureaucracy:

"I found solace in the conviction that the impact of almost forty-two years of a philosophy learned at the knee of John Lewis and administered first with Phil Murray and then on my own could never be lost on the workingmen of the steel industry. That was my satisfaction -- that and the knowledge that there was little left to seek for my steelworkers except periodic wage adjustments. We'd done it all. . . . I knew I was reaching, and therefore

I knew also that the Steelworkers had achieved just about everything a union could provide them under Murray and me."²³

In this light, the present period of rank and file revolt in organized labor can be seen as an attempt by the rank and file work groups that have reconstituted themselves since the late 1950's to regain some of the power and authority they lost within organized industry under thirty years of bureaucratic leadership. This struggle is an absolutely necessary one for industrial workers, who have been experiencing a marked decline in working conditions and real hourly wages in the last ten years, and increasing unemployment in the last five, a set of conditions which the present union leadership and institution of unionism has been ineffective in fighting. The "new era of labor revolt" is likely to continue until it places into union office a leadership which concerns itself more with the needs and demands of the work group than with the sanctity of the collective agreement with management. And, this is impossible given the present structure and government of the unions, given the present government of contracts, the compulsory arbitration of grievances, and unconditional no-strike pledges. The pattern of the rank and file revolts indicates that institutions as well as the people who lead them will have to be changed and that the process will take place on a scale as broad as, if not broader than, the upheavals that formed the industrial unions in the nineteen thirties.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Books:

- Barbash, Jack. (ed.) Unions and Union Leadership. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959.
- Baritz, Loren. Servants of Power. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1960.
- Beirne, Joseph A. Challenge to Labor. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969.
- Blumberg, Paul M. Industrial Democracy. London: Constable, 1968.
- Golden, Clinton S. and Ruttenberg, Harold J. The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942.
- Gouldner, Alvin W. Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1954.
- Gouldner, Alvin W. Wildcat Strike. Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1954.
- Harrington, Michael. The Other America. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962.
- Homans, George C. The Human Group. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950.
- Isreal, Joachim. Alienation -- From Marx to Modern Society. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971.
- Karsh, Bernard. Diary of a Strike. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958.
- Krause, Elliott. The Sociology of Occupations. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1971.
- McDonald, David J. Union Man. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1969.
- Olmsted, Michael S. The Small Group. New York: Random House, 1959.
- Preis, Art. Labor's Giant Step -- Twenty Years of the CIO. New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1964.
- Reisman, David, with Glazer, Nathan, and Eبنى, Reuel. The Lonely Crowd. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1961.
- Roethlisberger, F. J. and Dickson, William J. Management and the Worker. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939.
- Sayles, Leonard R. and Strauss, George. Human Behavior in Organizations. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966.

- Walker, Charles R. and Guest, Robert H. The Man on the Assembly Line. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952.
- Whyte, William H., Jr. The Organization Man. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1957.
- Zalesnik, Abraham. Worker Satisfaction and Development. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1956.

Articles and Pamphlets:

- Carey, Alex. "The Hawthorne Studies: A Radical Criticism," American Sociological Review, Vol. 32, No. 3, June, 1967, pp. 404-416.
- Collins, Orvis, Dalton, Melville, and Roy, Donald. "Restriction of Output and Social Cleavage in Industry," Applied Anthropology, Vol. 5, Summer, 1946, pp. 1-14.
- Hampton, David R. "Fractional Bargaining Patterns and Wildcat Strikes," Human Organization, Vol. 26, Fall, 1967, pp. 100-109.
- Hall, Burton. "The Coalition Against Dishwashers," New Politics, Vol. 6, No. 1, Winter, 1967, pp. 23-32.
- Hince, Kevin W. "Unions on the Shop Floor," Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 9, No. 3, Nov., 1967, pp. 214-223.
- Jacobs, Jim. "Sellout and Insurgency in the Auto Industry -- The UAW Settles with Ford," Radical Education Project, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1968.
- Karsh, Bernard. "The Meaning of Work in an Age of Automation," University of Illinois Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations Reprint Series, No. 52, 1957.
- Kovner, Joseph, and Lahne, Herbert J. "Shop Society and the Union," Industrial and Labor Relations Review, Oct., 1953.
- Sheppard, Harold I. "Discontented Blue-Collar Workers -- A Case Study," Monthly Labor Review, April, 1971, pp. 25-32.
- Walker, Charles R. "Life in the Automatic Factory," Harvard Business Review, Vol. 36, Jan. - Feb., 1958, pp. 111-119.
- Weir, Stanley, "New Era of Labor Revolt," Independent Socialist Publications, 1966, and in American Society, Inc. (Maurice Zeitlin, ed.), Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1970.

FOOTNOTES

1. Barbash, Unions and Union Leadership, p. 46.
2. Weir, New Era of Labor Revolt, and Jacobs, UAW Settles with Ford (1967).
3. Weir, New Era of Labor Revolt, p. 3.
4. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
5. Preis, Labor's Giant Step, p. 522.
6. See Blumberg, Industrial Democracy, and McDonald, Union Man.
7. Gouldner, Wildcat Strike, p. 34-37.
8. Karsh, Diary of a Strike, pp. 29-45
9. Ibid.
10. See Zalesnik, Workers Satisfaction and Development.
11. Reisman, The Lonely Crowd, p. 107.
12. Collins, Restriction of Output, pp. 9-12.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Homans, The Human Group, pp. 112-113.
16. Whyte, The Organization Man.
17. Kovner, Shop Society and the Union, p. 2.
18. Collins, op. cit., p. 8.
19. Ibid., p. 7.
20. Hampton, Fractional Bargaining, p. 100.
21. Ibid.
22. Golden, Dynamics of Industrial Democracy, pp. 60-61.
23. McDonald, Union Man, p. 324.

The IS's turn toward the working class has meant a dramatic change in the priorities of our newspaper. Where we once thought of ourselves as part of the student left, our aspirations now are to become a legitimate part of the working class movement. Where we once published our paper for a campus milieu, we now intend it for a working class audience.

The transformation of our paper is no easy matter. It is as difficult and uncertain as the transformation of the IS itself. We must expect to make many mistakes with the paper—we are still in the midst of a long process of feeling out ourselves and our audience, and under such circumstances mistakes come freely and naturally. We should feel no embarrassment or defensiveness in working through them.

We now have a year-and-a-half's worth of experience in putting out Workers' Power, however, and by now certain of our mistakes appear with such regularity, that if we don't do something about them, they may become permanent. What we write tells a lot about us, as individuals and collectively, as an organization. Workers' Power tells who we are and who we want to reach, what we are doing and want to do, what we think about and how we think. If only for these reasons, it should be the best paper we can produce.

Workers' Power: Writer and Audience.

We write and publish Workers' Power with certain goals in mind. Among other things, we want to inspire people with our critiques of capitalist society and imperialism. We feel we have some things to say that are different from what others are saying, we have ideas that have real power, and we want to spread them.

But there is more to writing than simply putting ideas on a piece of paper. First of all, you must know who you are. Writing is self-expression; if you don't know who you are, you will discover you have nothing to say, and can make no claim on anyone's patience to read what you've written. Secondly, you must know who you are writing for. The relationship between audience and writer is an extremely delicate one—each must know the other.

Who are we when we write for Workers' Power? Who makes up our audience? Are we "workers"? Are we "the vanguard"? Is our audience supposed to be made up of "workers"? New York member Brian M. (IS Bulletin No. 9) suggests that we should think of our audience as including "young workers (male, female, black, Latino, etc.), women in motion, blacks more generally, and students..."

Whatever you may think of these as images of the newspaper's general audience, they do not and cannot work for the individual writers who create the content of the paper. No writer can sit down and think "I am going to write for women in motion," or "I think I'll do this one for blacks in general." A writer needs a more definite view of his or her audience. If you try to write for an abstraction, you will end up with an article directed to no person or group in particular, one automatically devoid of any human content and any possibility for impact.

"ENABLING MOTION"

by Stan

Motion: That in addition to coming out for the right to strike at the local level, the IS raise the slogans:

For the rejection of All Contracts Containing Unconditional No Strike Pledges.

For an End to the Compulsory Arbitration of Grievances.

Elaboration, explanation and motivation: This is an enabling motion, both for our own operation neatness and clarity and to supply the ranks of labor with much needed information that will allow them to stand up to the bureaucracy in debate, that is, to arm them with some facts. The workers in some industries have become victims of the myth that there is no precedent for contracts containing the right to strike at the local level or with a conditional strike clause. Some have even been sold that the alternative to the present type of contract (containing the unconditional no strike pledge) is no contract at all.

There are many kinds of conditional no strike pledges. Some contract reserve the right right to strike over a failure to reach an agreement on wages, others over failure of an arbitrator to reach a decision, others still over a changed job rate, over production standards disputes, failure of an employer to contribute the required percentage of payroll to pension or other funds, or because management has sued for money over an unauthorized work stoppage. Reservation of a number of kinds can be made for any number of crisis areas INCLUDING INCENTIVE PAY AND OUTSIDE CONTRACTING OF WORK BELONGING TO THE WORKERS BARGAINING UNIT, providing of course the workers are united within their union and are strong enough to stand up behind the demand. There is precedent for conditional pledges in all the areas listed above.

Probably the most common reservation is that one connected with the grievance procedure. In its agricultural implement dept, the UAW has a number of contracts as has the IUE and the Allied Industrial Workers, which provide the right to strike AFTER the grievance procedure has been fulfilled short of arbitration on those grievances not stipulated for arbitration. In short, to arbitrate or to strike is a decision that the local union can make. The Intl. Harvester workers contract allows strike proceedings to begin after management has given the union its answer in the second step of the grievance procedure and that is a very strong point.

The joker in the UAW contracts, however, is that the strike must have the sanction of the International and so almost everything gained by having a conditional clause is lost.

A second joker in this type of contract is the amount of time in the notice that must be given before strike. Some contracts require up to 30 days. The UAW requires 4,

The goal for the ranks of American labor has to be the elimination of bans on the right to strike during the life of a contract, or just the reverse of the direction of the trend over the last decade. Unconditional no strike pledges were contained in 48% of all contracts in 1960. It went to 53% in 1965, and to 57% in 1970.

Summation: There is existing precedent for contracts containing the right to strike during the life of a contract over particular reservation(s).

The exact language of the UAW Ag. Implement contracts, for example, could be used by omitting the phrase demanding that the International union give its sanction.

The number of days notice could be shortened to whatever time the negotiators are forced to select. As little as 24 hours is possible even in industries like steel and glass, all that is necessary is that skeleton crews remain inside long enough to bank the furnaces or ovens. For this period, 24 hours is a good transitional figure in most instances.

The UAW Ag. Implement clause allowing strike after the management answer at the second step is hard to improve upon contractually, in fact, impossible to improve upon.

At the present time the consciousness of the ranks on this question is limited by a lack of information. If it is possible for us to supply a number with a working knowledge of how to raise these demands for the right to strike at the local level in an informed way, being able to supply the details as well as the basic slogan of the right to strike at the local level, we will have participated in helping to turn the tide in this area of contract bargaining. Once the turn occurs new kinds of escalation are possible out of the conscious expansion of what it is possible to do.

At present there are few unions winning more than 25% of the grievances they put into the expensive arbitration procedure before arbitrators who cannot know what life on the job is like for a day or a lifetime. Above is the way to make arbitration ~~voluntary~~ voluntary and to keep arbitrators ~~from~~ from getting rich.

Addendum to Motion: That these slogans, in the main motion be raised in connection with the current steel negotiations.

(The recommended details of a conditional strike clause as outlined above are not included in the motion due to differences from industry to industry. In each case this sort of detail of necessity must be arrived at after discussion with our friends in each industry and in full consideration of their recommendations and decision.)